

Madam Chair/ Mister Chairman, my name is Maggie Smith, I am seventeen years old, and I live in Lyme, CT. **I am here in support of house bill # 6200.** I have been tested for Lyme numerous times since I was 6 years old but wasn't officially diagnosed until 2005. Prior to that I had been diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis, Relapsing Polychondritis, migraines, and numerous allergies. Not satisfied with these improbable diagnoses, my family and I went to Rhode Island to a Lyme literate doctor who we had heard of who also took insurance. After listening to our story and conducting a few tests, including a CD-57, she told me I was so sick and that it was very possible that I had suffered with Lyme since birth. I was put on antibiotics and felt a difference within weeks. I continued therapy with varied success for about a year. It was suggested that I go on IV treatment since my Lyme was very resistant to the drugs. At this time the doctor I was seeing was forced to stop treating Lyme or the insurance companies would back out. My doctor was very upset but felt she had no alternative.

We started our search once again. My family can't afford the out-of-pocket expenses that most Lyme literate doctors require, so we had to try to find a way around the system. Next, we went to see a neurologist, since most of my symptoms are nerve based. Perhaps he could be convinced that it was Lyme related. Tests revealed that I was having complex partial seizures. The doctor told me that it couldn't be Lyme, despite the fact that I have a positive test! That did it for me. I gave up.

I turn 18 next Thursday, and I've been sick most of my life, and like most of these doctors have told me, "I just have to get used to it". For me, that means I have electric shocks down my arms and legs, I become so dizzy and disoriented that I can barely walk. I have a high temperature, my ears will be ringing making it hard to hear, I'll have a headache, and my eyes sting and become blurry making it hard to see, my whole body will be shaking, and on occasion I have difficulty breathing because my airway starts to swell. I learned how to manage going to school even when I was sick. I would hold on to the walls to get to class without falling, and once there I would not be able to see the board or hear what was being said, but at least I was at school. Not many people know about the effects my Lyme has on me, and they do not understand how severe it is. What's worse, I am not alone. If doctors were able to properly treat Lyme patients with the antibiotics they need without fear of reprisals, many more people would get the help they need. I am sick of going to doctors who think Lyme disease does not exist and that tell me it is all in my head. Worse than that, I hate that fact that those doctors told me that I would just have to live with it. I refuse to believe that I will have to live the rest of my life like this because I can not be properly treated. I believe this bill should be passed to protect those doctors who are familiar with the disease enough to realize that long-term antibiotics are required. Even if people get the opportunity to be properly treated, not all of them can afford it. For this reason it is also critical that the insurance companies are involved with treatment. Thank you for your attention to this situation.

Margaret Smith  
39 Sterling Hill Rd  
Lyme, CT 06371